

Photos of 100,000 soccer fans form giant mosaic at big-league match



“Colleagues in the printing industry were dumbfounded. They couldn’t imagine how anyone could collect photos of so many fans and print so many unique, individual images in such a short time.”
– Francisco Martínez, General Manager, Zyan Digital

HP customer case study: HP/Large Format Printing Division/FCB mosaic success story

Industry: Graphic services/Printing

Challenges:

- Bring *Futbol Club Barcelona* even closer to its fans
- Promote the club as a leader of innovation
- Increase sales of club memorabilia

Solution:

- Encourage fans to upload their photos to form a giant mosaic for a most important match
- Print the 26,000 mosaic elements on two HP Scitex TJ8300 Printers
- Create a personalized photo memorabilia service for:
 - Visitors to the club’s Web portal, using an HP Indigo press 5000
 - Visitors on the stadium tour, using HP Photosmart ps1100 Studio, and HP Color LaserJet 9500 and HP Designjet Z6100 Printers

Results:

- Club’s fans whole-heartedly supported the project
- 104,000 of their photos made up the mosaic on big day
- The media and printing industry professionals were highly impressed with the uniqueness of the mosaic
- 27% increase in sales of club memorabilia



The build-up to “El Clásico” is a time of emotional tension for supporters of Futbol Club Barcelona (FCB or “Barça”). This much-anticipated derby match against arch-rivals Real Madrid from the Spanish capital takes on particular visceral significance on the home leg, when Barcelona fans flock to the citadel of Catalan nationalism, the Camp Nou soccer stadium, the largest in Europe, with a capacity of 100,000. During the weeks before the game the fans live and breathe Barça. “This match is something vital in their lives,” enthused Robert Aran, Account Director for Herraiz Soto & Co. advertising agency in Barcelona. “It’s not just a game, more like the start of a battle, the feeling of *Braveheart* when two sides stand facing each other—It’s really serious.”

So what better event than this for the focus of a major interactive marketing campaign aimed at bringing the club closer to its fans, promoting it as a leader of innovation all over the world, and generating incremental revenue streams in the process? The giant mosaic of the club shield held up by spectators in the stands at the beginning of the game was a first of its kind. Although it took on the appearance of the shield from a distance, on close inspection



every one of its 26,000 pieces was unique, each an A2-size (~ C-size) print containing four photos—104,000 photos in total. These were the yield of an extraordinary mobilization of as many fans, who took the time to submit personal photos online in the run-up to the event and so form part of a record-breaking display that many in the printing business thought couldn't be done.

Souvenirs: Your picture with a player

One year before the derby, FCB had approached HP, exploring avenues for expanding its memorabilia business. The club makes money not just from sales of tickets and television rights, but also from souvenirs in numerous shapes and forms sold to tourists in the city and to supporters both at home and abroad. The club's president, Joan Laporta, believed a lot could be done using the power of the brand, the number of visitors to the club's museum (over 1,200,000 a year), and the number of hits to the club's Web site. Barça's board of directors backed him up, viewing HP as a unique partner to provide the different technologies needed for both printing of memorabilia for visitors to the stadium and development of online sales to a wider market.

"The board knew that HP was the number one brand in printing technology, and they were aware of our Snapfish portal," said Jordi Corominas, Worldwide Business Manager for HP Graphic Arts Enterprise Solutions. "They were attracted by the knowledge we had of the digital graphics market and our expertise in communication with both consumers and enterprises. HP could provide a wide range of services while at the same time being able to talk one-to-one with a multi-million-euro business like theirs." Right from the beginning Laporta stressed innovation, which is key for the club in the way it

markets itself and does business in general, and HP was a company that had innovation at the core of its philosophy.

The result was an agreement with HP and a two-pronged strategy to increase sales of memorabilia. First there was the onsite business at the stadium's museum. HP took over and revamped the existing green-screen technology there and added HP Photosmart ps1100 Studio, the retail solution that delivers albums, posters, calendars, photo cards, and CDs within a one-hour service environment. The unique feature here is that fans can mix professional content with their own personal content, specifying a calendar, for example, in which they appear in photos with different players for every month of the year. All products are high-quality photo products, produced there and then on an HP Color LaserJet 9500 Printer or, in the case of large-format prints, on an HP Designjet Z6100 Printer. These printers were chosen for the very fast speeds at which they can print exquisite photographic prints, since quality at speed is critical in this high-production environment where customers don't want to wait.

Online sales and interactive campaign

The second prong of the strategy was online: a Web portal where users can edit and order the same type of products available at the stadium. The club had never previously had the capability to offer such a service remotely. Fans from all over the world now go online, upload their personal photos, mix them with some of the best professional photos available of their soccer idols, and create their own customized photo albums, calendars, posters, and greeting cards. A print-service provider, pre-qualified by HP, receives the orders, prints the images on an HP Indigo press 5000, binds the albums and

“Comparing periods July-December 2006 and July-December 2007, there was an increase of 27% in sales of the club’s memorabilia. The great mosaic explosion that funneled so many fans to the Web portal happened only at the end of the year, so the outlook for the next year is very encouraging.”

— Jordi Corominas, Worldwide Business Manager for HP Graphic Arts Enterprise Solutions



calendars, and ships the finished products off to the fans. This digital press was the obvious choice for this type of work because of its genuine photo quality—comparable to that of traditional offset printing—combined with its affordability and the on-demand versatility of a digital device. The elegant printed souvenirs that arrive at fans’ doorsteps across the globe are also great ideas for birthday presents to give to Barça-crazy family members, friends, and colleagues, and perhaps even to any Real Madrid enemies one might have.

HP contracted the Barcelona-based advertising agency Herraiz Soto & Co. to develop both the portal and an innovative, interactive campaign to promote the memorabilia business. Robert Aran of Herraiz Soto described the resulting brand strategy (named *FCB Showtime*) as connecting the emotion of customers to the brand through the interactive opportunities offered by new technologies. “The DNA of FCB Showtime is emotional,” he said, “it’s exciting; fans really feel it from within when they go to the Web site and create a digital album of photos of themselves and their football heroes.”

To make a big initial splash, the focus quickly fixed on the most important event of the year for FCB, the event that involves the maximum number of fans: Barça playing Real Madrid in Barcelona. “Traditionally the most emotional moment, outside of the game itself, is when the mosaic is held up and the Barça anthem sung before this particular match,” said Aran. “We decided to put out a call to the fans to participate actively in the mosaic by uploading their pictures to the FCB Showtime Web portal. We were connecting personal images with an important Barça symbol and moment. By providing their pictures, fans would be embracing their team, supporting them to win.” Over 100,000 answered the call.

Large-format printing of 26,000 unique sheets

For the actual production of the prints that would make up the mosaic, HP chose a print-service provider that was already part of the HP-qualified PSP network. Located in the region of Murcia, in the south of Spain, Zyan Digital had the expertise and the equipment to get this complex job done on time.

Francisco Martínez, General Manager of Zyan Digital, was fascinated by the idea and took it on as a personal challenge. “It was something we had never tried before,” he said, “but I was convinced that with our two HP Scitex TJ8300 Printers we had the capacity to pull it off. The deadline was extremely tight, and we knew it couldn’t be moved; the match wasn’t going to be postponed. The crucial factor was the speed of the printers. No other machine on the market comes near to the speed with quality we get from the TJ8300’s, and with such cost-effectiveness. And for this project, traditional offset printing was out of the question, since every print was going to be different.”

An ONYX PosterShop RIP was used to process the files. The job was an imposition one: 72 photographs of Barça fans were printed on each big sheet, which was then cut into 18 A2-size (~ C-size) sheets of four photos. The 26,000 prints destined to form the mosaic covered a printed area of approximately 6,500 m² (approx. 70,000 ft²). In preparing the files, Herraiz Soto had assigned a PANTONE color to each A2 sheet, thereby color filtering the photos to form part of the club shield when viewed from a distance. Zyan Digital grouped images for printing according to color and packaged them also by color to facilitate correct distribution under the seats of the stadium.

